

# *Line of Duty Death Handbook*





This handbook is proudly dedicated to all of the everyday heroes who provide air and ground emergency medical services to their communities; the first responders, search and rescue personnel, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, nurses and pilots.

This project is close to my heart. Having been touched by several line of duty deaths, I know that, sadly, this handbook is necessary. At the same time I am proud to play a small part in honoring the EMS professionals who lose their lives in the line of duty. This guide will give you the standards and resources to handle this kind of crisis should it happen to your agency. Please accept this offering as it is meant, a tool to use part or all of, to adapt it to fit your agency. I hope you never have to use this handbook, but I encourage you to look it over and implement the planning stages. Being prepared is an important part of what we do.

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Thank you to all of the people and agencies that contributed to this handbook.

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## **I. Introduction**

This handbook is written to assist any EMS agency who must handle a line of duty death. While every EMS agency is different and many may have their own traditions as it relates to these incidents, it is important to handle these tragic occurrences with dignity, respect, confidentiality and sensitivity. This handbook is not meant to be followed completely; rather use it as a reference in conjunction with your own internal protocols and traditions. Throughout this document “EMT” is used simply to represent all levels of EMS provider.

## **II. Pre-Incident Planning**

The pre-incident planning for line of duty death includes gathering information about your personnel, the development of SOP/SOG’s and identifying resources.

### **A. Personal Information Packets**

Personal Information Packets for all members of the agency should be prepared now. They should include such items as emergency contacts, photos, wishes/desires of the member and career historical information. Packets should be completed by members in consultation with their families, updated on a regular basis and kept sealed in their personnel file. (Refer to Appendix – Personal Information Packet)

### **B. Standard Operating Procedures/Standard Operating Guidelines**

SOPs/SOGs should be developed to address such tasks as: notification practices, prepared media announcements, agency memorial and funeral procedures, personnel assignments and human resource needs.

### **C. Resources**

Resources need to be identified, including personnel for color or honor guards, uniforms and supplies and equipment (e.g., mourning bands, gloves, bunting for the station and funeral coach, flags, etc.).

A list of outside resources, including local, state, national and related EMS support organizations should be prepared.

### III. Initial Actions

An emotional and tense situation occurs at an incident with a death, probable death, or injuries severe enough that they will likely lead to the death of an EMT. Actions need to be taken to control the situation and to prepare for the events which will take place.

(Refer to Appendix- LODD Checklist)

A. ***Remember the rest of the incident***

B. Institute a radio discipline policy

- This should include limiting Facebook, texting, e-mail, blogs and Twitter

C. Assign a Public Information Officer (PIO)

- Expect a major media event
- Use prepared scripts so that the release of information is concise and accurate
- Schedule press conferences

Begin notifications

- EMT's family
- Manager (or higher) and an additional representative from the agency should notify the family in person of death and facts related to the incident. Have a medic unit nearby but out of sight.
- A family liaison should remain with and/or be available to the family and should be the conduit for all information to/from the family.
- All agency personnel
- Mayor, County Commissioner or Trustees
- Coroner for an autopsy

D. Initiate a thorough investigation into the incident with law enforcement leading

- Recover and secure all personal protective equipment
- Secure the scene – consider it a possible crime scene
- Establish an investigation team

E. Contact support agencies

- Provide for critical incident stress debriefing and grief counseling for the agency
- Neighboring EMS agencies and fire departments
- EMS county, city and state authorities
- Company/agency senior management
- Insurance carrier
- National EMS Memorial Service ([www.NEMSMS.org](http://www.NEMSMS.org))

## **IV. Investigative Issues**

A thorough investigation into the cause of the fatality should be conducted by law enforcement including the possibility of criminal activities. Legal representation may be required. A full autopsy should be conducted by the coroner. If you have a separate safety/risk team, contact them to determine whether they have an existing protocol to follow for the investigation.

- A. Secure the scene.
- B. Law enforcement should conduct a thorough investigation if this is a trauma death since possible criminal activity may be involved. Follow local or state protocols if this is a medical death; the local law enforcement agency may conduct an investigation.
- C. Collect appropriate statements from individuals. This is not intended to suppress the facts, but rather to suppress incorrect and unnecessary opinions. Stick only to the facts. If facts are not known, this should be clearly stated.
- D. Recover and secure all protective clothing and equipment.
- E. Maintain records – interviews, radio tapes, incident reports, photographs and drawings.
- F. Have an autopsy performed. It is essential that steps be taken to ensure that the cause of death is accurately reported.
- G. Obtain at least six (6) certified copies of the autopsy report and death certificate. These copies may have to be requested by the family.
- H. Notify the Public Information Officer and monitor all media inquiries.

## **V. Post-Incident Issues**

Assist the family in planning the funeral/memorial as they choose. This may include agency involvement, transportation, meals, childcare, etc. The agency assigned Family Liaison Officer should be the interface between the family, the agency and others.

Continue to inform agency members and officials of arrangements.

Solicit local law enforcement, fire departments and other EMS agencies for support. This may include assistance with the investigation, traffic control during the funeral and response area coverage for an extended period of time.

Monitor agency members closest to the incident to see how they are dealing with the loss. Provide for critical incident stress debriefing and grief counseling for the agency as needed. Consideration may also have to be given to allow members time off to cope with the tragedy.

## VI. Family Issues: How to Help the Family

### A. At the Hospital or the Morgue – Assign an Agency Representative to Assist

- Offer to have a member of the agency drive the family to the hospital and stay for as long as necessary.
- Work with the hospital staff to secure a private room where the family can gather. This should be separate from the general waiting area if possible.
- If the EMT was badly injured or disfigured, help prepare the family for what they will see. Always allow family members to make the decision.
- Assist the family in dealing with hospital staff.
- Provide assistance to the family in making calls to relatives and close friends. Answer incoming calls for the family or get messages to them at the hospital.
- Work with the family to arrange a plan for dealing with the media. The family may wish to have a member of the agency speak for them.
- Have someone available to drive the family home from the hospital. Offer to help with continuing visits as much as resources allow. Offer to stay with the family at the house.
- Offer to assist with day-to-day tasks such as home maintenance, arranging for childcare, or bringing meals and other necessities to the family.

### B. From Time of Death through the Funeral

- Work with the family in planning the funeral. ***Remember that the family's wishes should always come first.*** If they want a private funeral the agency may consider holding a separate memorial service, however, the family should still be consulted.
- If there are children in the family, consider creating a special role for them (be sure to ask before mentioning this to the children).
- Offer to assist with lodging or transportation for out of town relatives and friends.
- Offer to have a member of the agency stay with the family prior to the funeral. Consider rotating people as needed in order to maintain an agency presence with the family.
- Have someone available for tasks such as answering the phone, driving the family to the funeral home to make arrangements or running errands.
- Help coordinate household duties such as food preparation, cleaning and childcare. Do necessary maintenance such as mowing the grass or clearing the snow.

- If donations are collected for the family, set up a bank account to deposit these funds.
- Coordinate with local law enforcement officials to make routine checks of residence and neighborhood.
- Assign an agency member to help the family set guidelines for dealing with the media.

**When assisting the family with funeral arrangements remember that the family's wishes and religious preferences take precedence over agency traditions.**

### **C. Ongoing Support**

- Continue to talk with the family about your memories of the EMT. Most families want to hear about their loved one even if it is emotionally difficult.
- Remember that parents of a fallen EMT need support and contact just like spouses and children do.
- Set up an award or other recognition named after the deceased and invite the family to attend the annual award ceremony.
- Consider creating some kind of tribute to the fallen EMT. This could be a local memorial, a video tribute, a scrapbook, or a scholarship in the EMT's name. Prepare a tribute that is fitting for your EMT and special to the family.
- Help with what the EMT used to do – yard work, fixing things around the house, attending children's sports and school events, etc.
- Only promise what you actually can do. Keep all your promises.
- Instead of saying "call if you need anything" offer to help with specific tasks and then follow through. For instance, say "I would like to come over on Thursday to fix the fence."
- Take all steps necessary to secure benefits for the family. The process is often lengthy so keep the family involved.
- Continue to invite the family to agency events, but don't be disappointed if they don't always attend.
- Remember that some events, such as holidays and the anniversary of the date of death, may be especially difficult for the family. Even families who seem to be doing well may need extra support and contact during these times.
- Contact the family before releasing any information on investigations, incident reports, etc.
- Encourage the family to attend the National EMS Memorial Service Weekend and other local, state, and national tributes. Offer to help make travel arrangements and attend with them whenever possible.

## VII. Notifications

### A. Next of Kin

**The importance of the next of kin notification cannot be over-emphasized.** This process sets the tone for the difficult times the family will face. Sensitivity and compassion are important.

The name of the deceased EMT must never be released by the agency before the immediate family is notified. If you need to ask neighbors while trying to locate the family, do not inform neighbors of the death. If asked, reply that you need to find the family regarding a medical emergency and ask if they know where the family can be found.

Family notification should be made as quickly as possible to avoid the family receiving a notification from another outside party. The media may employ many efforts to seek out the name of the fallen EMT. Use all necessary measures to protect the next of kin from unwanted media exposure.

For this reason, a Notification Team needs to assemble rapidly. The team should consist of: highest agency manager, agency chaplain, clergy (family bishop, pastor, minister, etc.), Family Liaison Officer and an EMT friend of the family or close family friend. Check the EMT's Personal Information Packet for their wishes and/or recommendations.

If the fallen EMT's family lives far enough out of the area making the agency's notification impractical, a EMS agency (or law enforcement agency) in that area should be asked to make a timely notification.

In the event that the agency experiences the loss of more than one member, then multiple notification teams will need to be assembled and deployed.

Before arriving at the residence, verify the latest information, decide who will speak and what they will say. Because of the emotional circumstances involved be prepared for the family to strike out and blame the agency for their loss.

Steps to be taken at the residence:

- 1) It is recommended to have a medic unit on standby near the residence, but not in view, especially if there is a known medical problem with a family member.
- 2) At the door identify yourself and ask to come in. (Notification should take place in a private setting.)
- 3) When inside ensure you are notifying the right person.
- 4) It is important to put all of the known basic facts into one sentence. Make sure the message is absolutely clear and direct.

- Begin with, “I have very bad news” or “I am very sorry to tell you.”
- Let them know what happened, “Your husband/wife died responding to a call,” or “John was killed in an ambulance crash.” (Use the EMT’s first name when appropriate.)
- Allow the family to express their emotions. Do not try to talk them out of their grief. Also, since this is a very sad time, do not mask your own grief.
- Provide only the facts you know, never speculate. Answer all questions honestly. If you cannot answer a question, find the correct answer.
- Avoid the following phrases: a) *“I know how you feel”* b) *“It was God’s will”* c) *“Life will go on”* d) *“He would have wanted to go this way”* e) *“Be brave”* f) *“Passed away.”*
- Ask if the agency can assist by notifying immediate family members (parents, brothers and sisters).
- Never leave immediately after making the notification. Have at least one member of the agency stay with the family – preferably the Family Liaison Officer.
- Ask the family if they wish to see the deceased EMT, even if the body is badly disfigured. People often have a need to see, touch and hold the deceased; otherwise they may be in denial. This is often very helpful in the family grief process. It gives a sense of finality.
- If family members wish to see the EMT, arrangements need to be made rapidly for viewing. Sensitivity to the family is very important. Provide the best possible environment and avoid delays that heighten the family’s anxiety.
- Offer to transport the family to the location of the EMT and help prepare them for what they will see. It is highly recommended that the family not drive themselves. If the family insists on driving, a uniformed EMT should accompany them in the family vehicle. (NOTE: If family members arrive on the scene during on-going operations it is important to identify them and keep them out of the direct flow of operations, particularly if the body is still on the scene.)
- If you transport the family in an agency vehicle, advise dispatch that you are transporting the relatives and turn off your radio or switch to an alternate channel. Communicate by phone.
- If the agency’s Family Liaison Officer is not present at the notification, the family should be given the contact information. If possible the Family Liaison should already be known by the family.
- Advise the family that the Family Liaison Officer will contact them to assist with the necessary arrangements.

- Advise the family of possible media calls. Unwanted media exposure will only add to the difficulty of the tragedy. Suggest that a friend of the family screen incoming calls. Offer to be the media spokesperson for the family.
- Assure the family that their wishes are important to the agency.
- Advise the family that an autopsy may be required and why it is necessary.
- Ensure that the family understands that they do not have to make any immediate decisions regarding services, mortuary, wills, etc. The agency's Family Liaison Officer will be able to provide assistance.

## **B. Agency Members**

It is very important that all members of the agency be notified of the death as soon as possible, including those off-duty and vacationing personnel. (Refer to Appendix– LODD Memo to Staff)

In the event of an on-duty death the external monitoring of radio frequencies may be extensive. Communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone whenever possible. Agency personnel should not give out any information about the incident unless it is approved by the manager or PIO.

For a line of duty death a message, prepared and/or approved by the manager, should be transmitted to personnel.

### **LODD Sample Announcement**

*It is with deep regret that announcement is made of the death of (certification, name) who lost his life in the line of duty while participating in operations on an EMS call (location, date and time).*

For a death other than a line of duty, an announcement should be transmitted to personnel.

### **Non-LODD Sample Death Announcement**

*It is with deep regret that announcement is made of the death of (name) on/at (date/time).*

### **C. Media**

The line of duty death of an EMT is fortunately a rare occurrence for agencies. When it does occur, the media as well as many others, are interested in obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Every effort should be made to provide *essential* facts but the information provided should be done only after the next of kin has been notified. Care should be given so that information critical to an investigation of the incident is not compromised.

The PIO, with the approval of the manager, can arrange for news conferences, written news releases and interviews. Information provided during a news conference should be prepared in advance. A press kit should be prepared and may include biographical information, photograph and service information.

### **D. Others**

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the incident, notification of the death of an EMT may also be given to:

- Local elected or governing officials
- Neighboring agencies
- Public Safety Officers Benefit Program (PSOB), 1-888-744-6513
- National EMS Memorial Service (NEMSMS), 1-877-230-3147
- Elected State and Federal senators and representatives

## **VIII. Staff Assignments**

In order to provide the best possible tribute to the fallen EMT, it is extremely important for the agency to organize an effective team to manage all of the related activities. The organizational structure that will become necessary to control and coordinate this effort can be patterned after the Incident Command Structure (ICS) that is utilized to manage major emergency incidents. (Refer to Appendix – Funeral Staff Assignments)

The manager should have overall responsibility for directing the activities. It is recommended that the manager assign, as a minimum, individuals to function as: Funeral Coordinator, Family Liaison Officer, Public Information Officer, Church Coordinator, Procession Coordinator and Cemetery Coordinator. Other assignments or personnel may be established depending on the agency's make-up and desires (e.g., Hospital Liaison, Reception Coordinator and Benefits Coordinator). It is also recommended that these duties be assigned to individuals now – before an incident occurs. This will allow those individuals an opportunity to research and recommend a course of action for the agency to follow prior to an incident. Backup personnel should also be assigned to positions.

**A. Funeral Coordinator (FC)** – The Funeral Coordinator is the overall coordinator for the agency’s involvement in the planning and participation in the funeral. This person needs to be able to effectively communicate with the manager, funeral team members, agency members and the public. The FC may have these additional duties:

1. Conduct coordination meetings with key personnel as needed.
2. Assure notification of all off-duty and vacationing personnel.
3. Arrange to have flags lowered to half staff.
4. Make appropriate follow-up contacts when the funeral arrangements have been made.
5. Personally collect all of the deceased personal items from the station and forward them to the Family Liaison Officer.
6. Become the contact person for outside agencies.
7. Make appropriate arrangements for a post funeral meal/reception.
8. Contact support agencies, as appropriate, to arrange for their assistance.
9. Contact appropriate agency personnel to arrange for finalization of paperwork, forms, etc.
10. Contact neighboring agencies for purpose of area coverage during the funeral.
11. Contact law enforcement and other agencies for assistance during the funeral.

**B. Family Liaison Officer (FLO)** – The FLO is the primary agency connection with the family, the conduit for all information flow to/from the family. The FLO should be assigned an agency vehicle for the entire funeral process and should be available to the family 24-hours a day by phone or pager.

The FLO should be prepared to discuss all parameters of the funeral process and ceremonies and to assist the family in its decisions. These may include but are not limited to: the internment, wake, funeral home, religious service, cemetery, burial garment (uniform or other), music, eulogy, procession, reception, child/family care. The FLO needs to know what services the agency can and cannot provide.

The Family Liaison Officer also needs to work with the family to obtain necessary documentation – autopsy reports, birth and death certificates, marriage certificates, military records and insurance documents. The FLO can assist in obtaining the benefits due the family such as:

1. Public Safety Officers Benefits
2. Pension/retirement systems
3. Local insurance benefits
4. Workers’ compensation
5. Social security
6. Veterans benefits
7. Union or state EMS related organizations
8. State/Federal education benefits
9. Other local, state or regional organizations

**C. Public Information Officer (PIO)** – The Public Information Officer should coordinate and disseminate, with the approval of the manager, all information regarding the line of duty death. The release of names of injured or deceased EMTs should *never* be done prior to the notification of the next of kin. The PIO's responsibilities may include:

1. Coordination and/or presentation of all media contacts including interviews, news conferences and written news releases.
2. Coordinate the notification of:
  - a. Local public officials
  - b. State EMS organization
  - c. Neighboring agencies
  - d. Public Safety Officers Benefit Program (1-888-744-6513)
  - e. National EMS Memorial Service ([www.NEMSMS.org](http://www.NEMSMS.org))
  - f. State and Federal elected officials
  - g. Other related state and local organizations
3. Establish information telephone numbers – recorded or live.
4. Prepare press kits – biographical information, pictures, service information, maps, etc.
5. Organize media coverage. Use media pool coverage to limit and manage media areas at the service and burial.
6. Prepare printed service programs for viewing, funeral and burial.
7. Manage VIP arrangements.

**D. Church Coordinator** – The Church Coordinator assists with all phases of the funeral and/or memorial services. This person works closely with the Family Liaison Officer to ensure that the needs and desires of the family are being met. Duties may include:

1. Working with the funeral home director to ensure that the family is taken care of appropriately in the planning of the funeral.
2. Determine whether agency vehicles will be used as a funeral coach, family transportation and for the processional.
3. Coordinate with the honor guard.
4. Obtaining and delivering to the funeral home director burial clothing from the family or from the agency.
5. Coordinates any formal walk-through of uniformed personnel during the period of viewing.
6. Assists in coordinating the funeral service such as prayers, readings, music and eulogies.
7. Assists with arrival and seating of agency members, visiting agencies, dignitaries, friends and family.

**E. Procession Coordinator** – It is the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to coordinate the procession from the funeral service to the cemetery. Duties may include:

1. Coordinating with other agencies that will be involved with the procession.
2. The cleaning and preparing of agency vehicles.
3. Establishing staging areas for vehicles and apparatus at the funeral service and at the cemetery.
4. Contacting and working with law enforcement in setting up traffic control, directing traffic and assisting in the staging area.
5. Determining and placing the procession vehicles in order.
6. Determining the route of the procession, how long the procession will be and if the procession will pass in front of the EMS station or other special location.
7. Providing maps and directions to the service.
8. Assigning personnel to assist in parking cars as well as setting up personal vehicles for the processional.
9. During a walking procession directing individuals into proper placement.

**F. Cemetery Coordinator** – The Cemetery Coordinator is responsible for the events at the cemetery from the time the processional arrives until the end of the service and everyone has left the cemetery. This person works with the Family Liaison Officer and the funeral home director in determining how the grave side service is put together. Duties may include:

1. Ensuring the proper placement and formation of agency members, honor and color guards, bugler, pipers, drummers, firing squads, visiting agencies, friends and others.
2. Coordinating with the cemetery the overhead protection for the immediate family, public address system, parking, staging and security.
3. Coordinating medical stand-by personnel at the cemetery.
4. If a flag is going to be presented to the family, coordinating the presentation with the agency or other personnel involved.
5. Providing any details or instructions regarding post-funeral gatherings.

**G. Honor Guard** – A detail of agency members in dress uniform with white gloves that are normally positioned at the head and foot of the casket. They may escort the casket to the funeral and cemetery. They can also act as pallbearers.

**H. Pallbearers** – Pallbearers are chosen by the family (usually six to eight individuals) to “bear the body of the deceased.” Their duties may include passing the casket from the chapel to the funeral coach and then from the vehicle to the grave side. If the agency vehicle is used as a caisson to carry the casket the pallbearers from the agency may be assigned to drive and/or ride on the vehicle from the beginning to the end of the funeral procession.

**I. Color Guard** – A detail consisting of at least an American flag bearer and a State flag bearer.

## IX. Funeral Considerations

Decisions regarding the funeral are the responsibility of the family. However, consideration should be given to the individual's wishes, if he/she communicated those wishes before his/her death (Personal Information Packet); the family's religious customs and EMS service traditions.

The honors and support provided by the agency may be affected by circumstances surrounding the death, established agency protocol and the classification (type) of death.

### A. Classifications

*Type I:* Death occurs as a result of an on-duty incident or job related.

*Type II:* Death occurs when an active EMT is off-duty and not relating to any emergency activities.

*Type III:* Death pertains to a retiree of the agency.

### Suggested Services for Funeral Types

Listed below are the different types of funerals and suggested options which may be offered to the family. The Family Liaison Officer should coordinate the arrangements with the family. The most important item in any situation is that prior approval of any and all funeral options must be given by the family of the deceased. Under no circumstances should assumptions be made.

### Suggested Options

OPTION	TYPE I	TYPE II	TYPE III
American Flag Presentation	X	X	X
Badge Shrouds	X	X	X
Bagpipers/Drum Corps	X	Opt	Opt
Bugler	X		
Color Guard	X		
Eulogies	X	X	X
Flowers	X	X	
Honor Guards	X	X	X
Honor Detail	X	X	
Active Member Pallbearers	X	X	X
Station Bunting	X		
Vehicle Bunting	X		
Walk of Honor	X	X	X
Fly By – Rotor Wing if in area	X		

***\*\*Respect the desires of the family\*\****

**B. Guidelines for the Funeral/Memorial Service**

**Type I Service – On Duty (Refer to Appendix – Funeral Service Diagram)**

All available agency personnel requested to attend in dress uniform including off-duty members.

All members will wear a black band over their badges from the time the death is announced until 24 hours after the service. The agency may choose to have the shroud remain on the badge for a thirty day mourning period.

All agency flags will fly at half staff from the time of the death is announced until at least 24 hours after the service and up to one week after death.

All regular uniformed personnel will remain covered (with hats) while outdoors, except during prayers, and uncovered indoors.

All honor guard members will be covered (with hats) at all times during the performance of their duties.

Seating will be reserved so that the family is nearest the casket followed by the pallbearers, the agency officers (descending in rank), followed by all other members of the home agency. Following that will be all visiting uniformed EMTs. The city mayor, council members and other dignitaries will be seated either to the side of all EMTs, or directly behind the home agency.

Upon conclusion of the service all uniformed personnel, excluding the pallbearers, will file out to assemble outside in preparation of the passing of the casket.

The casket will precede the family through the assembled EMTs to the funeral coach.

The pallbearers will then place the casket on the funeral coach.

**Type II Service – Off Duty**

All available agency personnel requested to attend in uniform.

All members will wear a black band over their badges from the time the death is announced until 24 hours after finish of service and up to one week after death.

All agency flags will fly at half staff from the time of the death is announced until at least 24 hours after the service and up to one week after death.

All regular uniformed personnel will remain covered while outdoors, except during prayers and uncovered indoors.

All honor guard members will be covered at all times during the performance of their duties.

Seating will be reserved so that the family is nearest the casket followed by the pallbearers, any agency officers who wish to attend, followed by all other members of the agency. Following that will be any visiting uniformed EMTs. Any dignitaries will be seated either to the side of all EMTs, or directly behind them.

Upon conclusion of the service all uniformed personnel, excluding the pallbearers, will file out to assemble outside in preparation of the passing of the casket.

The casket will precede the family through the assembled EMTs to the funeral coach.

The pallbearers will then place the casket in the funeral coach.

### **Type III Service – Retiree Death**

All available agency personnel requested to attend in uniform.

All members may wear a black band over their badges from the time the death is announced until 24 hours after the service.

All regular uniformed personnel at the service will remain covered while outdoors, except during prayers and uncovered indoors.

All honor guard members will be covered at all times during the performance of their duties.

Seating will be reserved as such that the family is nearest the casket followed by the pallbearers, agency officers, all other members of the home agency, all visiting uniformed EMTs and any dignitaries.

Upon conclusion of the service all uniformed personnel, excluding the pallbearers, will file out to assemble outside in preparation of the passing of the casket.

The casket will precede the family through the assembled EMTs to the funeral coach.

The pallbearers will then place the casket in the funeral coach.

## C. Guidelines for Processional to and Assembly at Graveside

### Type I – On Duty

(Refer to Appendix– Funeral Procession Diagram and Cemetery Service Diagram)

*NOTE: There are two options for proceeding to the graveside – marching and vehicular procession.*

Marching Processional – It is the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to ensure that the order for the marching processional is appropriate and that the bugler is standing by at the cemetery.

- Piper(s) and drummer(s)
- Color guard
- Clergy/agency chaplain
- Funeral coach with pallbearers and honor guard escort
- Immediate family
- Agency officers in descending order of rank and dignitaries
- Home agency uniformed personnel
- Visiting agency uniformed personnel
- Home agency vehicles
- Visiting agency vehicles
- All other miscellaneous vehicles

Vehicular Procession Only – It is again the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to ensure that the order for the vehicular processional is appropriate and that piper(s), drummer(s), bugler and color guard are standing by at the cemetery.

- Lead car provided by funeral home, containing appropriate clergy/ agency chaplain
- Funeral coach with pallbearers
- Car or limousine with immediate family
- Agency car followed by officer cars and dignitary cars
- Additional home agency vehicles
- Visiting agency vehicles
- All other home agency personnel, if in personal vehicles
- All other visiting agency personnel, if in personal vehicles
- All other miscellaneous vehicles

### Assembly at Graveside

- The piper(s) and drummer(s) will be assembled approximately 100 yards from the gravesite; the bugler will assemble approximately 20 feet past the gravesite.
- Walk of Honor – the members of the home agency shall line up on both sides of the path, in an organized fashion from the funeral coach to the graveside with all additional home agency EMTs and visiting agency EMTs lining up behind the front row of EMTs.
- Once the EMTs are appropriately assembled the color guard will line up at the beginning of the Walk of Honor followed by the clergy.
- At this point the pallbearers will remove the casket from the funeral coach and the honor guard will command “Attention.” All EMTs will then come to attention, awaiting the command “Present arms” which will signal the pallbearers to begin carrying the casket down the Walk of Honor and all EMTs will render a hand salute as the casket nears them.
- The casket will be followed in order by the immediate family, the agency officials in descending rank and other dignitaries.
- Once the casket reaches the gravesite the piper(s) and drummer(s) may begin playing ‘Amazing Grace’ as they approach from the distance, marching to approximately 20 feet from the foot end of the graveside.
- After the piper(s) and drummer(s) reach their appropriate places, the command “Order arms, fall in” will be given, instructing the EMTs to move from their places in the Walk of Honor, to orderly lines directly behind (or across from) the family who are to be seated directly in front of the casket.
- The appropriate clergy then should step forward with the graveside message depending upon the wishes of the family.
- At the close of the graveside message the clergy may then commence with “Let us now pray.” At this time all are expected to remove and order their covers to their sides and bow their heads in respect.
- Once the clergy has finished the prayer all personnel will recover, the honor guard will remove the flag from the casket (if used) and fold it for presentation to the family.
- The flag will be passed from one member of the honor guard to the honor guard commander with members of the honor guard saluting as it passes.
- The presentation to the next of kin will be made by the agency manager who will present it as he/she explains,

*“This flag is presented on behalf of a grateful (city, township, county, etc.), as a small token of our appreciation for the honorable and faithful service, and great sacrifice of your loved one.*”

- It is then appropriate for a dispatcher to announce this farewell message.

*“The members of the (agency) wish to thank (certification and name) for his/her (# years) of services to the citizens of this (city, township, county, etc.) of (name). Although you are gone, you will never be forgotten.”*

- At the conclusion the honor guard commander will command “Attention, present arms” and the bugler will begin to play ‘Taps.’
- At the conclusion of ‘Taps’ the command “Order arms” will be rendered and the EMTs will stand at attention until the family has begun to depart.
- Information about the reception or other family desires may be announced.
- At this point the honor guard commander will command, “Dismissed” concluding the services.

## **Type II – Off Duty Death**

Procession – It is again the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to ensure that the order for the vehicular processional is appropriate and that piper(s) and drummer(s) are standing by at the cemetery.

- Lead car provided by funeral home, containing appropriate clergy.
- Funeral coach with pallbearers
- Car or limousine with immediate family
- Agency vehicles
- All other agency personnel
- All other vehicles

### Assembly at Graveside

- The piper(s) and drummer(s) will be assembled approximately 100 yards from graveside.
- The pallbearers will remove the casket from the funeral coach and begin carrying the casket to the graveside.
- The casket will be followed in order by the immediate family and present EMTs.
- Once the casket reaches the gravesite the piper(s) and drummer(s) may begin playing ‘Amazing Grace’ as they approach from the distance, marching to approximately 20 feet from the foot end of the graveside.
- The appropriate clergy then should step forward with the graveside message, depending upon the wishes of the family.
- At close of the graveside message the clergy may then commence with “Let us now pray.” At this time, all are expected to remove and order their covers to their sides and bow their heads in respect.
- Once the clergy has finished the prayer all personnel will recover.
- It is then appropriate for a dispatcher to announce this farewell message.

*“The members of the (agency) wish to thank (certification and name) of this (city, county, township, etc.) of (name). Although you are gone, you will never be forgotten.”*

- At this point the services are concluded.
- Information about the reception or other family desires may be announced.

### **Type III – Retiree Death**

Procession – It is the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to ensure that the order for the vehicular processional is appropriate, as follows, and that piper(s), drummer(s), are standing by at the cemetery, according to the family’s wishes.

- Lead car provided by funeral home, containing appropriate clergy.
- Funeral coach with pallbearers
- Car or limousine with immediate family
- Agency vehicles
- All other agency personnel
- All other vehicles

#### Assembly at Graveside

- The piper(s) and drummer(s) will be assembled approximately 100 yards from the graveside, according to the wishes of the family.
- The pallbearers will remove the casket from the funeral coach and begin carrying the casket to the graveside.
- The casket will be following in order by the immediate family and present EMTs.
- Once the casket reaches the graveside the piper(s) and drummer(s) may begin playing ‘Amazing Grace’ as they approach from the distance, marching to approximately 20 feet from the foot end of the graveside.
- The clergy should then step forward with the graveside message, depending upon the wishes of the family.
- At the close of the graveside message the clergy may then commence with “Let us now pray.” At this time, all are expected to remove and order their covers to their sides and bow their heads in respect.
- Once the clergy has finished the prayer all personnel will recover.
- It is then appropriate, according to local customs, for the dispatch to read this farewell message over the radio.

*“The members of the (agency) wish to thank (certification and name) for his/her (# years) of services to the citizens of this (city, township, county, etc.) of (name). Although you are gone, you will never be forgotten.”*

- At this point the services are concluded.
- Information about the reception or other family desires may be announced.

#### **D. Viewing/Vigil Considerations**

The family may desire to have a time for a viewing or vigil. The agency should coordinate its participation with the Family Liaison Officer. Often the family will request an honor guard be posted at each end of the casket. It is generally proper protocol for the honor guards to wear their uniform hat inside the church or mortuary, including the time spent posted alongside the casket. Gloves should also be worn. It would be acceptable for immediate family members to be escorted by agency personnel to and from the viewing. It may be helpful to have members of the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team available for counseling.

#### **E. Memorial Service Logistics**

There are a number of issues regarding the memorial service that should be taken into consideration:

1. Ensure the facility is large enough to handle the anticipated numbers. You may have to plan for overflow.
2. The agency may need to coordinate traffic control and parking with other agencies.
3. Work with the family in establishing the program and obtaining speakers for the service.
4. Assist with the printing and distribution of a written program.
5. Coordinate seating arrangements for the family, VIP's, agency personnel, visiting agencies, officials and friends.
6. Arrange for an adequate PA system.
7. Coordinate music requests from the family with musicians, etc.
8. If services are held outside, arrangements may be required for a tent, chairs, restrooms, water, stage, power, etc.
9. Rehearsals may be needed for key personnel.

#### **F. Recommended Presentation Order for Memorial Service**

1. Invocation
2. Prayer
3. Opening remarks/greetings
4. Special music
5. Scripture reading/clergy remarks
6. Speakers
  - a. Mayor
  - b. Local elected official from district
  - c. State or Federal officials
  - d. Family representative(s)
  - e. Agency representative
  - f. Union representative
7. Eulogy – manager or person requested by family
8. Special music

9. Presentations
10. Closing remarks/prayer
11. Bagpipes
12. Dismissal instructions

#### **G. Suggested Presentation of the Emblem**

The manager may present the deceased members badge to the family.

*(Name of nearest of kin) it is an honor that I have the privilege presenting to you an emblem of the (agency) of which our late brother/sister was a member; his/her emblem symbolizes the esteem we held for him/her. May the memory therefore always bring happiness.*

#### **H. Recommended Program for Internment**

1. Assembly
2. "Officers attention, salute" (command given when casket is placed over the grave)
3. Opening prayer
4. Scripture reading
5. Bagpiper
6. Committal reading, closing prayer
7. Taps
8. Flag folding
9. Flag presentation by manager
10. Reception/family announcements
11. "Attention, dismissed" (command given to conclude service)

#### **I. Suggested Graveside Services**

Chaplain or agency member can read or recite:

*Reverently we commit the body of our brother/sister to the grave (flames, if cremation) "Earth to Earth" – "Ashes to Ashes" and "Dust to Dust." Though our brother/sister has passed beyond our mortal view, through our faith in the Almighty we know that we can leave him/her in the hands of the Supreme Chief of the Universe who doeth all things well; who is glorious in His holiness: wondrous in His power; and, boundless in His goodness and love to His children.*

*Now, my brother/sister, with a firm faith in the almighty, we know we shall meet you again in His house and until then – my brother/sister – farewell.*

*May the Almighty bless thee and keep thee; let His face shine upon thee and be gracious to thee; may the Almighty lift up the light of countenance upon thee and give thee peace. Amen.*

## **J. Reception Logistics**

It is often the agency's responsibility to organize and provide food and refreshments at a reception at the conclusion of the burial service. This will probably take place at a location away from the cemetery. The Funeral Coordinator should assign an individual to coordinate the activity. The following should be taken into consideration:

1. Location site – ensure site is suitable in size with adequate parking
2. Maps to be passed out at the cemetery
3. Number of anticipated attendees
4. Anticipated starting/closing times
5. Menu and refreshments (provided by agency or catered)
6. Tableware and seating
7. If outside, tents, restrooms, seating
8. If speakers/program, PA and stage
9. Relocation of flowers
10. Agency provided transportation for individuals.

## **K. Setting Up Memorials**

Paying tribute to the fallen EMT is honorable and should be done. Setting up a memorial can also help with the healing process of the family and the agency. Permission should be obtained from family member before setting up the memorial.

There are several ways a memorial can be made – erecting a permanent memorial marker; establishing a trust or scholarship fund (check with the bank for the proper type of account); annual agency memorial service; attendance or contribution in the name of honoree to yearly National EMS Memorial Service.

When an EMS service sets up a memorial fund, it might be easier to set up a savings account in the name of the EMS agency for “(name of deceased) Memorial Fund.” If a trust fund is set up there are more difficult tax liabilities and other problems that may be encountered.

## **X. Survivors Benefits**

The death of an EMT is often a difficult time for the entire agency. Many details and arrangements need to be addressed in a short period of time. One major item which is sometimes overlooked is the identification and completion of the various claim forms that are required to assure the deceased member's family receives the benefits available to them. The agency should take the responsibility for seeing that this is carried out. The benefits available can vary as a result of the circumstances surrounding the cause of death, whether the EMT was a volunteer or paid, prior affiliations and places of employment and locally established benefit options. The agency should research and prepare a listing of the potential benefits available to its members.

### **A. Federal Benefits**

#### **Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program**

(Refer to Appendix – PSOB Fact Sheet)

The PSOB Program provides a one-time financial benefit to the eligible survivors of public safety officers whose deaths, or permanent and total disability, are the direct and proximate result of a traumatic injury, heart attack or stroke sustained in the line of duty. The total benefit amount is adjusted annually on October 1. The benefit is adjusted by the percentage of change in the Consumer Price Index.

Following the death of an EMT the agency needs to identify an agency liaison with the PSOB Program. The liaison then needs to:

1. Call the PSOB at 1-888-744-6513 (leave a message and be sure to include all of the required information).
2. Provide accurate up to date information including:
  - Agency name and address
  - Liaison's name
  - Phone number for the agency and liaison
  - An email address, fax number or mailing address so the PSOB can send the death benefits questionnaire
  - Deceased EMT's name
  - Date of the incident and death
  - A brief description of the incident

The agency liaison must complete and return the questionnaire to PSOB immediately. This information is vital. In describing the incident, as much detail as possible should be given; however, do not speculate if the cause of death is not known.

The PSOB will send an information package with a form (Report of Public Safety Officer's Death) that the agency must complete and a form (Claim for Death Benefit) that the survivors must complete and sign. With the form the family submits, several original documents will need to be attached (e.g., birth certificate, marriage license, divorce decree, etc.). PSOB will not return items unless specifically requested (Refer to Appendix – Fact Sheet).

Upon verification of the claim the PSOB will notify the next-of-kin of the status of the claim. The agency liaison should be available to provide assistance to the family.

### **B. Agency of Veterans Affairs**

The Agency of Veterans Affairs may be able to provide family assistance for veterans in obtaining a burial site, marker and flag. Contact the VA 1-800-827-1000.

### **C. Social Security Administration**

Depending on the work history of the deceased EMT and their participation in the Social Security program, his/her family may be eligible for benefits provided by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Assistance can be obtained from regional SSA offices or at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

If eligible, survivor benefits may include:

- A one-time lump-sum payment is payable to the surviving spouse provided the deceased employee and the spouse were living together at the time of death, or the surviving spouse is entitled to survivor benefits. If there is no surviving spouse, the lump sum is paid to children who are eligible for benefits. Otherwise, the lump sum is not payable.
- Social Security will pay survivor benefits to a surviving spouse and dependent children. For the spouse to qualify, he/she must be at least age 60, or between the ages of 50 and 59 and disabled, or any age and caring for a child under the age of 16 or a disabled child. Children may qualify for benefits if they are under age 18 (or under age 19, if in high school) or disabled. Dependent parents and former spouses may also qualify for survivor benefits. The amount of the benefit depends on the deceased employee's Social Security earnings and the number of survivors eligible for benefits.

#### **D. State Benefits**

Each agency needs to investigate what state and local benefits are available.

#### **E. Local Benefits**

Survivor benefits vary greatly by locality. The deceased EMT's own agency may have available benefits and/or scholarships. The agency should prepare a potential source list now. Items that could be included are: life insurance policy, accidental death policy, deferred compensation program and civic and EMS related organizations. A special fund or trust may also be set up for the family.

## **XI. APPENDIX**

### **LODD Checklist**

- Notification of agency chief officers
- Radio discipline policy
- Scene security
- Notification of local law enforcement agency
- EMT's Personal Information Packet referenced
- Notification Team established
- Notification Team-verification of information about deceased (facts only)
- Notifications of:
  - Family
  - Agency members
  - Local officials
  - Neighboring agencies
  - State EMS Association
  - National EMS Memorial Service
- Request flags half staff
- LODD Investigation Team
  - Secure EMT's PPE and other safety equipment from base or quarters
  - Contact County Coroner & Medical Examiner
  - Autopsy arranged
  - Copies of death certificate (minimum of six)
- Contact support agencies
- CISD Team
- Public Safety Officers Benefit Program
- LODD staff assignments
- Funeral Coordinator
- Family Liaison Officer
- Church Coordinator
- Procession Coordinator
- Cemetery Coordinator
- Public Information Officer
- Prepared media release (only the facts)
- LODD supply kit (mourning bands, gloves, bunting, flag, etc.)

## Funeral Coordinator

- Notify off-duty personnel
- Lower agency flags to half staff
- Notify neighboring EMS agencies
- Notify other city and county agencies
- Collect and secure deceased members personal items for Family Liaison Officer
- Contact support agencies for assistance benefits
- Arrange for response area coverage during funeral
- Arrange for law enforcement and other agency assistance during funeral
- Arrange post-funeral meal/reception
- Coordinate all funeral arrangements with staff coordinators and agency

## Family Liaison Officer

- Notify deceased members family in conjunction with the manager
- Contact hospital for family visit if needed
- Coordinate family's funeral desires with agency
- Coordinate benefit applications with family
- Arrange for family's child care as needed
- Make post-funeral follow-ups with family

## Church Coordinator

- Coordinate viewing/vigil with funeral home director, Family Liaison Officer and agency
- Coordinate church services with church, funeral home director, Family Liaison Officer and agency
- Coordinate agency staff roles
- Coordinate honor guard
- Coordinate pallbearers
- Coordinate/assist with services
- Assist participants with arrival/parking/seating

## Procession Coordinator

- Coordinate staging areas
- Establish procession route
- Prepare maps/directions as needed
- Establish/coordinate processional order
- Prepare agency vehicles
- Prepare stations as needed
- Prepare agency vehicle for use as caisson
- Coordinate staging, traffic control, etc. with law enforcement agencies

## Cemetery Coordinator

- Establish placement of personnel and guests
- Coordinate staging, parking and security
- Coordinate standby medical personnel
- Coordinate flag presentation
- Coordinate drummer(s) and piper(s)
- Coordinate bugler
- Coordinate dispatch farewell message
- Notify participants of post-funeral arrangements

## Public Information Officer

- Coordinate all media contacts
- Coordinate notifications
  - Surrounding agencies
  - Local public officials
  - Local professional EMTs union, if union member
  - State EMS Association
  - National EMS Memorial Service
  - Other related state and local organizations

**EMS AGENCY**

**PERSONAL INFORMATION PACKET**

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Last:		First:		Middle:		
Address:			City:		State:	Zip:
Home Phone:			Cellular Phone:			

**EMERGENCY CONTACT 1**

Please identify family members you would like the agency to contact. Please list them in order for contact. NOTE: If the contact is a minor child, please indicate the name of the adult contact.

Last:		First:		Relationship:	
Address:		City:		State:	Zip:
Home Phone:		Cellular Phone:		Pager:	
Employer:		Address:		City:	State:
Work Phone:		Is this person your primary beneficiary?			

Special Circumstances (age, health, etc.) or instructions:

**EMERGENCY CONTACT 2**

Please identify family members you would like the agency to contact. Please list them in order for contact. NOTE: If the contact is a minor child, please indicate the name of the adult contact.

Last:		First:		Relationship:	
Address:		City:		State:	Zip:
Home Phone:		Cellular Phone:		Pager:	
Employer:		Address:		City:	State:
Work Phone:		Is this person a beneficiary?		Explain:	

Special Circumstances (age, health, etc.) or instructions:

**CHILDREN - NAMES AND D.O.B.**

Please provide the names and date of births of your children:

	/ /		/ /
	/ /		/ /
	/ /		/ /
	/ /		/ /

**AGENCY MEMBERS**

Agency member(s) if any that you would like to accompany the Notification Team to make notifications.

**OTHER ASSISTANCE TO NOTIFICATION**

Identify anyone else that you would like to help make the notification (example: bishop, minister, friends, etc.)

Last:	First:	Relationship:
Address:	Home Phone:	Cellular Phone:
Employer:	City:	
Work Phone:	Other Information:	

**FUNERAL/MEMORIAL SERVICES**

Do you wish to have an EMS service funeral, as established by Agency Procedures? \_\_\_\_\_.  
If no, may the agency hold a public EMS memorial service, if cause of death is L.O.D.D. related? \_\_\_\_\_.

Disposition: Burial \_\_\_\_ Cremation \_\_\_\_ Other Instructions:

Funeral Home Choice: Cemetery Choice:

Has cemetery plot been purchased? Are flowers to be omitted in lieu of a charity or organization?

If, Yes: Please identify charity or organization:

Preference as to who will deliver the eulogy? Please Identify:

Favorite Songs:

Favorite Poems:

Favorite Readings:

Favorite Scriptures/verses:

List preferences for Pallbearers:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**ARMED FORCES**

Are you a veteran of U.S. Armed Services? Please identify which branch?

If entitled to a military funeral, do you wish to have one?

**OTHER CRITICAL INFORMATION**

Are you a member of a local union?	Would you like a union representative at notification?
Do you have a Will?	Do you have a Living Will?

Life Insurance Policy:	Agent & Policy #:
Death & Disability Insurance:	Agent & Policy #:
Are you an organ donor?	Driver's license indicates that you are an organ donor?

List any special requests, wishes or directions that you would like to be cared for in the event of your death or serious injury:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Next of Kin Signature

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Date

**CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION:**

*The information provided will be utilized by the agency in the event of your death to assist your family in preparing for your funeral and obtaining the benefits available to them. Please make sure that someone close to you knows this information.*

UPDATE INFORMATION:

The information provided is accurate and requires no revisions/changes:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witnessed by

## **LODD Sample Memo to Staff**

TO: EMS Agency Staff  
FROM: Manager  
RE: Line of Duty Death Announcement  
DATE:

It is my sad duty to inform you that at \_\_\_\_ (time) today (rank and name) died in the line of duty.

I will provide you with more information as soon as it is available, including details of services.

This is a difficult time for the entire (EMS Agency), and we will need to come together to get through it. All of us know when we choose EMS as a career that this type of occurrence is possible but that does not make it any less tragic or any less difficult to bear once it actually happens.

At this time our thoughts and prayers are with the \_\_\_\_\_ family. I urge you to support the agency in any way you can to see to the family's needs during this difficult and trying time.

\_\_\_\_\_ has accepted the assignment as the Family Liaison Officer and will be coordinating the agencies support to the family and assuring their needs.

I wish I had the words to ease the pain we are all feeling, but I don't. I would remind you that (first name) was an exceptional (rank) doing the job he/she loved serving our community.

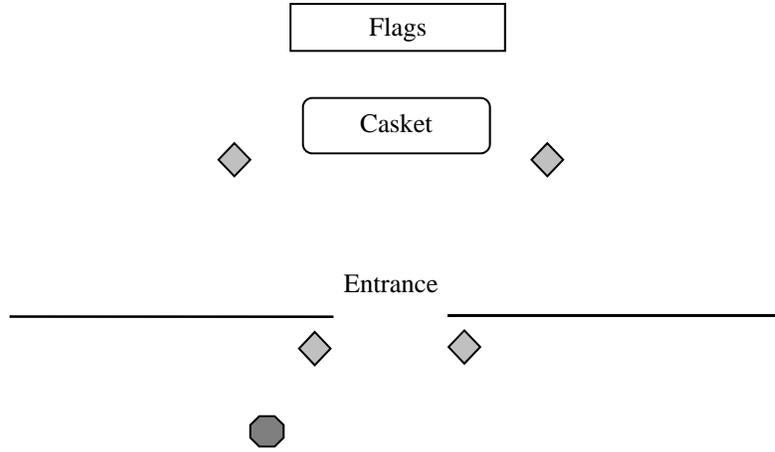
### **Badge Shrouding**

A black band is placed across the badge as a sign of mourning, and is a way of publicly expressing sorrow at the death of an employee. Badges may be shrouded from the time of the notification of death until sundown the day of the funeral. Some agencies choose to extend the mourning period to thirty days.

Badge should be shrouded from the topside of the shoulder diagonally down to the sternum (across the heart), or horizontally through the middle.

# Funeral Service and Funeral Procession Diagrams

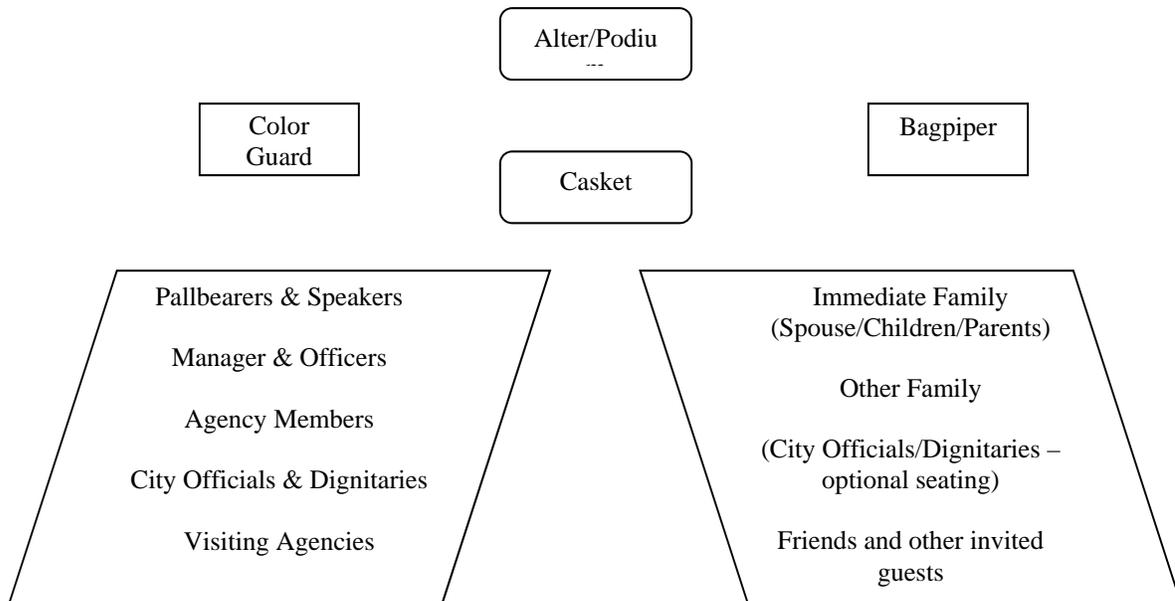
## Visitation



◆ Honor Guard Member-one member standing at attention at the head and foot of the casket and one at each side of entrance door. Plan a rotation schedule every 15-30 minutes

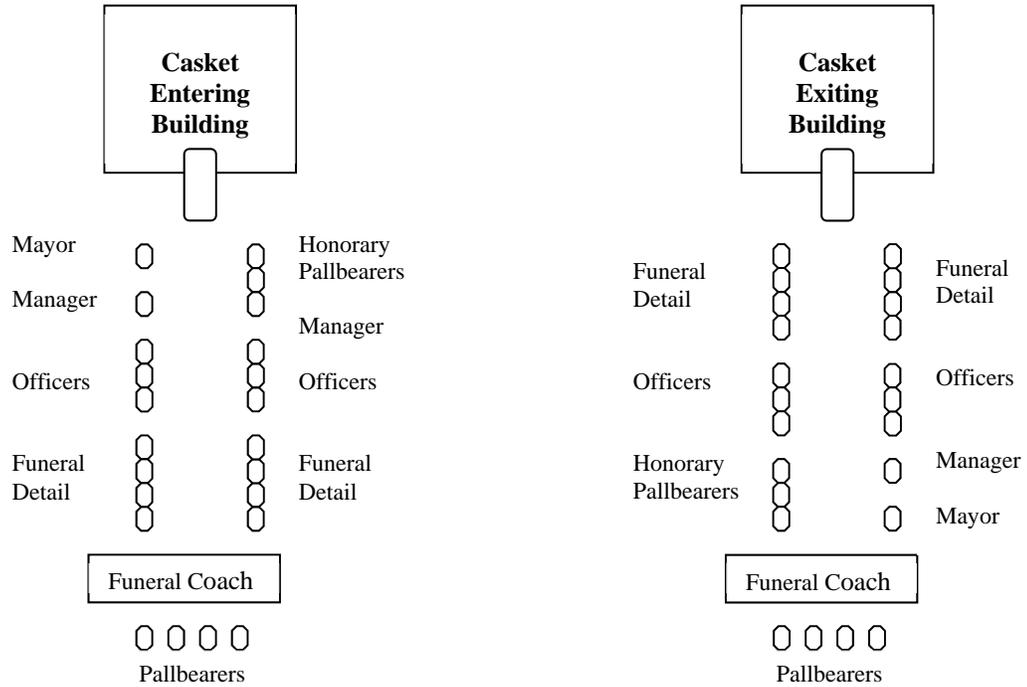
⬡ Manager or other Agency Officer

## Inside the Church for Service

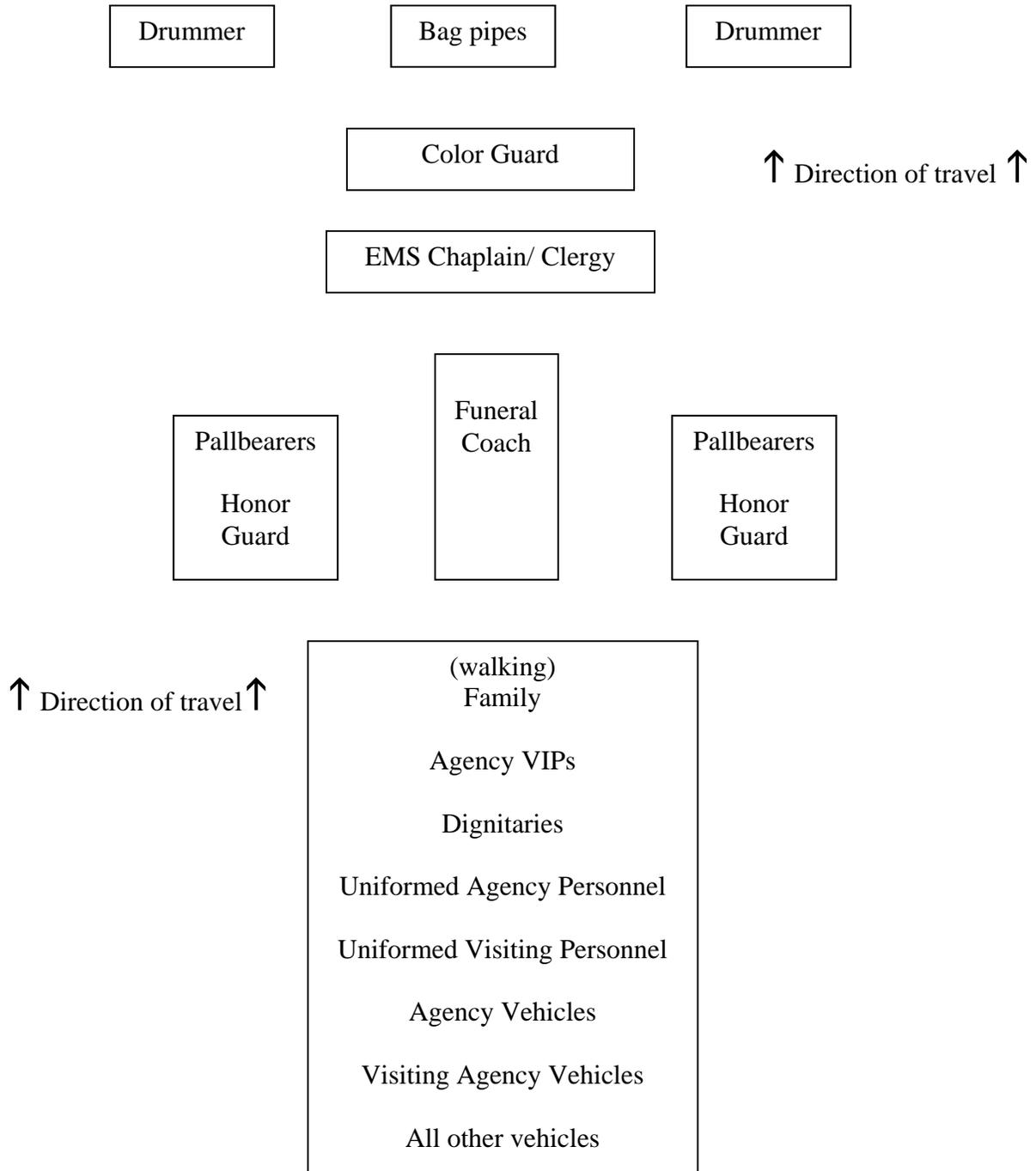


## Outside the Church

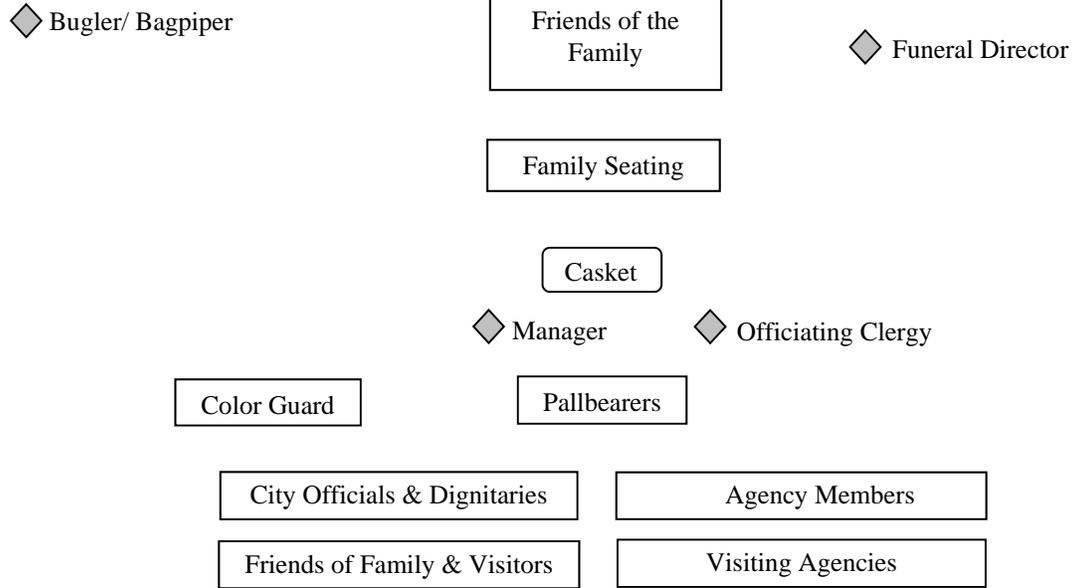
The funeral formation is formed before the casket is moved and the casket is then carried through the formation followed by the family and friends.



Vehicle Processional - Marching  
(Conducive to short distance)



# Cemetery Service Diagrams



## **Public Safety Officers Benefits (PSOB) Fact Sheet**

On September 29, 1976, the President signed Public Law 94-430 establishing a death benefit to eligible survivors of firefighters and police officers from local, state and federal organizations. The legislation became known as the Public Safety Officers Benefit Act.

The Act has been amended several times since 1976. The most profound amendments came in November 1988, November 1990, October 2001, and December 2003.

The PSOB Act, amended in 1988, increased the death benefit to \$100,000. It had an escalator clause tied to the Consumer Price Index, which increases every October 1. Death benefits to public safety officers on and after January 1, 2001, became \$250,000. Based on the Consumer Price Index as of December 2003, the benefit has increased to \$267,494.

Among the 1988 amended changes made were beneficiary requirements. The Act added benefits for the survivors of single firefighters or police officers, including parents, without regard to dependency. Spouses became eligible automatically, as did stepchildren, adopted children and children born to unmarried parents. Parents also were included if they were the only survivors - whether or not they were dependent on the child - as long as a parent/child relationship existed. Children over 18 are eligible when they are less than 23 and a full-time student. When there is a surviving child or children, and a surviving spouse, one-half of the benefit will be provided to the child or children of the officer in equal shares. One-half goes to the surviving spouse.

Because the PSOB benefit is not paid into the deceased officer's estate, benefits are not paid when an officer dies without an eligible survivor.

To be covered, a firefighter or rescue squad person must be an officially designated member of a fire or rescue squad (agency). Under the law, an "officially designated" person is one who is carried on the agency's membership roll as an active member. If not on the listed roll, beneficiaries must prove that the individual was conscripted legally at the scene of an emergency to engage in emergency operations.

To be covered, a firefighter's death must be the result of a traumatic injury suffered in the line of duty. A traumatic injury is a blow to the body by an outside force. An accident in which the victim suffers crushing injuries in a building collapse is eligible, as well as accidents involving apparatus or falls. Burns, smoke inhalation and such climactic injuries as heatstroke or frostbite are considered traumatic injuries.

Death from stress, heart attacks, strokes and diseases, including occupational diseases, are not covered by the law unless a traumatic injury was a substantial factor in the death. To be a substantial factor, a traumatic injury must have been capable in itself of having caused the death. Smoke inhalation is considered a substantial factor in a heart or stroke related death

when the firefighter's blood/carbon monoxide level is 10% or greater for nonsmokers, 15% or greater for smokers.

Excluded from the coverage are deaths from suicide, intentional misconduct, gross negligence and voluntary intoxication. Intoxication is described as evidence by a postmortem blood alcohol level of .20 percent or greater. A postmortem blood alcohol level of a least .10 percent, but less than .20, will exclude coverage unless the Bureau receives convincing evidence that the public safety officer was not acting in an intoxicated manner immediately prior to his/her death. Exclusion will also be made if the blood tests show evidence of the introduction of drugs or other substances into the blood.

President Bush, on December 1, 1990, signed into law the "Crime Control Act of 1990." This legislation includes a major revision to the PSOB. The revision at that time made available \$100,000 to any public safety officer who becomes permanently and totally disabled as the direct result of a catastrophic personal injury sustained in the line of duty.

An amendment to the Crime Control Act of 1992 changed the funding so the death and disability benefits are the same. Thus the disability benefit is \$250,000 until October, 2002. The catastrophic injury is defined as "consequences of an injury that permanently prevents an individual from performing any gainful work." As with the death benefit, the amount of the award will be adjusted annually.

Limitations to the new PSOB are that beneficiaries are not eligible to collect both the disability and death benefits. An example of this limitation would be if a firefighter became permanently injured, collected the disability award and later died from the injuries, his beneficiaries would not be eligible for the death benefit.

Congress and the President amended the Act in 1998, which the Bureau of Justice Assistance implemented September 14, 1999, to include a revision to provide educational assistance to spouses and children of all Public Safety Officers killed in the line of duty or permanently and totally disabled by catastrophic injuries sustained in the line of duty. The dependents will be eligible on a retroactive basis if the Safety Officers death or disability occurred on or after October 1, 1997.

On October 25, 2001, the United States Congress voted to significantly increase the benefit to \$250,000. The provision, included as part of the anti-terrorism bill (H.R. – 3162), is retroactive to January 2001.

On December 15th, 2003, President Bush signed into law the Hometown Heroes Survivor Benefits Act (S. 459 / H.R. 919), which will expand the PSOB program to cover public safety officers who die of heart attacks or strokes in the line of duty. The death benefit is payable to the survivors of a public safety officer who "has died as the direct and proximate result of a personal injury sustained in the line of duty." Unfortunately, in almost every incidence of death by heart attack or stroke, it had been ruled that the heart attack or stroke was not a direct result of an injury sustained in the line of duty and the family receives no benefits even though the deaths were clearly triggered by the rigors of the job.

The Hometown Heroes Survivor Benefit Act will correct that deficiency in the law, by ensuring that a public safety officer who suffers a fatal heart attack or stroke while on duty or not later than 24 hours after participating in a physical training exercise or responding to an emergency situation, is presumed to have died in the line of duty for purposes of public safety officer survivor benefits.

At the present time, less than 50% of the firefighters and rescue personnel who lose their lives during emergency incidents have the survivors receive the proper benefits. In many cases, the agency is ignorant of the benefit, but more often proper procedures have not been followed.

Insurance agents can be a great asset to their emergency service clients by keeping themselves up-to-date on current requirements and status of the PSOB, informing the clients of changes, and making themselves available when the need arises to assist in filing claims.

An extremely important requirement of the PSOB is for a postmortem examination and a proper blood gas test to be performed. It is the awesome responsibility of the agency's chief officer to make sure that the pathologist, medical examiner, and/or coroner of the jurisdiction, is aware of the particular requirements of the PSOB Act and the necessary tests be performed. When insurance agents review the fire agency's insurance program, a review should be made on the agency's standard operating procedures in handling personnel line-of-duty deaths.

Ensure that the agency knows how to contact the Agency of Justice, that it should be notified as soon as possible (within hours) after the incident and the importance of the blood test and postmortem. An agent may be one of the first persons notified about the accident and could be a great asset in a very trying time for an agency. When the Bureau of Justice Assistance is called, the representative will need basic information as to the circumstances of the death and will give guidance for further information that is needed to complete the contact.

To obtain current information or notification of a death, call: (202) 307-0635 or (888) 744-6513 or write to:

**Public Safety Officer's Benefits Program**  
**Bureau of Justice Assistance**  
**810 7th Street, NW**  
**Washington, D.C. 20531**

## **Guidelines for Death of a Support Staff Member (Non-field)**

- If a call comes in requesting next of kin information from the police or the coroner's office, the call should be directed to Human Resources (HR). HR will then give home address and/or emergency contact information. HR will not notify the department leader until the employee's family has been informed.
- After learning of the death of an employee, the leader of the department should notify HR (if HR has not notified the leader) and then hold an all team department meeting to inform co-workers.
  - Have counseling available and discuss the program
  - Share visitation/funeral details if available
- HR should call the family for any needed information and to share sympathies. HR should be the point of contact for the deceased family.
  - Needed information:
    - Contact information for benefits
    - Funeral information
    - Additional information needed for memo to workforce
    - Where to send last check, personal items, etc.
- HR and/or supervisor notifies communications team or administrative support to create a memo to send to entire worksite from site/department leader.
  - Include next of kin information, visitation and funeral times (if available)
- Discuss with payroll the most appropriate way to distribute last paycheck, take employee's name out of system, contact any life insurance company for claims processing for family.
- If necessary, HR should contact the benefits team to set up a counselor to come in a day or two after the news of the death is shared.
  - Once the counselor arrives have another team meeting together.
  - Team meetings are optional as some may not want to share feelings or participate.
- Manager should share next steps (filling position with a temp assignment or posting to hiring for position, clearing desk time, etc.) and funeral information if haven't done so.
- HR and/or supervisor should clear the former employee's desk a few days after death. If possible do so at the end of the work week and/or after hours. Notify the department team members in case they would like to ensure they are away from the desk at that time or would like to help.
- HR and/or supervisor collect cards from co-workers to mail to the family and/or help create a memory book to present to the family.
- Flowers should be sent on behalf of the company/group.
- If the employee signed up for electronic W-2, then the W-2 will not be automatically sent to the family in January. HR will need to contact payroll to have the W-2 sent.

National EMS Memorial Service  
2910 N. Powers Blvd. #119  
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80922  
[www.nemsms.org](http://www.nemsms.org)  
1-877-230-3147

American Ambulance Association  
8400 Westpark Drive Second Floor  
McLean, Virginia 22102  
[www.the-aaa.org](http://www.the-aaa.org)

American Medical Response  
6200 S. Syracuse Way Suite 200  
Greenwood Village, Colorado 80111  
[www.amr.net](http://www.amr.net)



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